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To the Editor of THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT STUDENT.

DEAR SIR :—In the February number of the STUDENT Prof. Burnham says, discussing Isa. 66: 12-14, "When and where did all this have a historical fulfilment? When or where can it, in the future, be historically realized?" That does, at first appearance, present an insuperable difficulty. He then proceeds to point out the discrepancy between the prophetic conception and the historical realization of the Scriptures. These are the alternatives suggested. "One is to say that the prophetic conception, because of the limitation existing in the prophet's own intellectual and spiritual condition, as these were created by his place in the history of revelation, necessarily often rendered, despite the inspiration of the Spirit, his conception of the future, fragmentary, incomplete, or, so far as the form went, untrue to the historic realization of the future. The other way is to suppose that prophecy often had a conditional element; and that the prophet, in such case, set forth what he was endeavoring to realize in the national life."

I am inclined in the main to accept the former position. I think it, on the whole, better in accord with the more correct, and the nobler views, of prophecy. Take the following passage from Dr. Briggs' *Messianic Prophecy*, p. 28, "In the marvellous progress of Hebrew prophecy the most significant factor is the combination of the real and the ideal. In the midst of the circumstantial and the variable, adapted to particular persons and occasions, the determining influence is ever the essential ideal which abides, amidst all the vast variety and intricate complexity of detail, the permanent, the everlasting and the ultimate—not a stereotyped ideal in forms to which everything must be conformed, but a living ideal, adapting itself with ease and grace to every circumstance and every occasion and every person, and yet so exalted above the temporal and the local and the purely formal, that these are incapable of limiting its growth or checking its progress. It is indeed a living, an eternal, an absolute, an infinite ideal—what else can it be than the product of the divine mind?" It is true that the conditional element is everywhere in moral life—in the life of man under the government of God; and, therefore, it must appear in the sphere of prophecy. That element lies there by reason of the constitution of the world and mankind. I cannot think, however, that this element enters very largely into that distance which separates the fulfilment of prophecy from the imagery with which it is clothed in the Sacred Scriptures. I am persuaded this difference attaches more to the mind of the prophet than the sins of the people. Assuming the organic development of the race, the growth of knowledge from more to more, the present conception and statement must of necessity differ from its realization. The conception is a part of the present in which the prophet lives and moves and has his being. It could not be otherwise in the normal order of the world. The conception is of the mind, temporal, transitory. The truth has a higher and more interior source. Prophecy and its fulfilment belong to different times and epochs of development in the Kingdom of God. The fulfilment, then, will have a new environ-

ment, a new neighborhood and consequently, in phenomena, it can never be in agreement with the uttered prediction. That difference will be the difference by which the ideal has advanced in the progressive work of redemption.

Take the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the new commonwealth of Israel; how could they be realized, line by line and letter by letter, in a kaleidoscopic transformation born of the tremendous movement in the old covenant which bore the promises of God on through surging waves of popular tumult, and universal revolutions, to the time of the Incarnation? The question may be raised, also touching the new theocracy of Ezekiel, and minor visions of other prophets. Is there not something wrong in the mental habit which requires such a fulfilment? I feel that there is. Here is a bent of mind, in respect to prophecy, that would compel the most artificial methods; and force the way of God in creation into antagonism to his ways in the development of his gracious purposes of mercy.

It surely would not be an advance from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord, if the fulfilment of prophecy was compelled to reproduce the identical character and circumstances of the prediction. The idea of the spiritual advance would be crippled if not suppressed. The study of prophecy would become the discovery of the identity of types and antitypes rather than the magnificent contemplation of an advancing evolution of spiritual ideas into clearer, and still clearer light, from lower to higher, from narrower to wider dominion, and power.

How much all thoughts are elevated in the light that comes into prophecy through the advent of Jesus Christ. Scarcely a local feature is preserved and reproduced in the finished life of Jesus. But who will say that he does not fulfil the old? Yea he is himself, in the Spirit, the fulfilment of all prophecy uttered or unexpressed, in earth's deepest yearnings. In him, without nationalism, and without limitations, the law and the prophets find their climax.

His life vindicates the organic and spiritual view of prophecy; and crowns with light the fact of God's fidelity to his word through the prophets. If there be any discrepancy, or any moral element of uncertainty it is more than met in this reflection, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

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